

*Vietnam*

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NSC BRIEFING

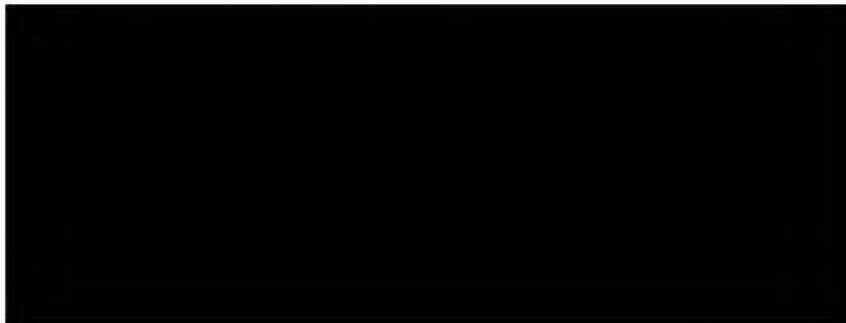
8 November 1954

SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

I. Reactions to announcement of Gen. Collins' mission vary.

- A. Paris officials professed to welcome it, probably hope it signals relaxation of US support for Diem.

B.



- C. General Ely feared mission would be construed as evidence US intent to "take over;" suggested he might have to leave.
- D. But later, Ely's deputy, Daridan, described mission as logical outcome of Washington understandings.
- E. Said French willingness fully to support Diem as "permanent solution" conditioned on premier's making peace with army and getting capable Interior Minister (no doubt Tam).

II. Bao Dai still very much in the act.

- A. Saw Collins mission as useful vehicle for laying down line to Diem about being more "co-operative."

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- B. Says he regards self as father of naughty children that must be brought into line.
- C. Has sent emissary, now in Saigon, with order to Hinh to proceed Paris for consultation, but insists Hinh's services still essential; also wants Binh Xuyen chief in cabinet.
- D. Diem admits Bao Dai's "support" has large price tag.

III. Meanwhile, Buu Hoi getting bigger than ever build-up.

- A. French press giving him big play.
- B. He has backing of some of Mendes-France's principal advisers.
- C. They reported planning put pressure on Bao Dai to replace Diem with Buu Hoi before Mendes leaves for Washington.
- D. Alternatively, would persuade Bao Dai to return and take over for short period before relinquishing helm to Buu Hoi or Buu Loc.

IV. French has several possible motives for backing Buu Hoi.

- A. One is, possibly, simply to keep pot boiling, maintaining maximum room for maneuver.
- B. But more important is fact Buu Hoi's neutralist views, past association with Viet Minh jibe with French desire to remain on good terms with Viet Minh.
- C. Our embassy in Saigon describes him as "incredibly Naive," though he would probably be easily manipulated.

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D. Diem describes him as not immoral, but amoral, a "sieve for money" who maintains two French mistresses, and occasionally others.

E. He told Diem a year ago he was for Viet Minh because it was efficient but if more efficient government turned up he would support that.

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